

Cops targets car safety

By John T. Stephens III
Sentinel-Voice

Summer, when the living is easy, also is the time when auto thefts increase.

The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD), city of Las Vegas, Mervyn's, Allstate Insurance Co. and United Blood Services (UBS) are joining to bring awareness to auto theft prevention, alerting the public about car theft and anti-theft devices. The free event will be held Saturday, March 27 at the Mervyn's, 4700 Meadows Lane, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The UBS bloodmobile will draw donations.

"Summer months are when auto theft numbers go through the roof," said Sgt. Al Bechyné of Metro's auto theft prevention unit. "We want to educate the public on how to protect their vehicles."

Bechyné estimates between 14,000 to 15,000 cars are stolen each year in the LVMPD jurisdiction. The area doesn't include statistics from Henderson or North Las Vegas. Thousands of cars roll in and out of the Las Vegas Valley every day, compounding the problem. It means big business for car thieves, Bechyné said.

Nationally auto theft is a \$7.2-billion

illegal business. Growth areas appear to be rare parts and parts for older or classic cars. To combat this lucrative illegal business, Allstate Insurance and Metro will re-introduce programs that have been proven effective in thwarting car thefts and carjackings.

Allstate's "V.I.N. Etch" program stencils a car's Vehicle Identification Number on all vehicle windows, "so vehicles can be easily identifiable by an officer," said Bechyné.

Metro's "Watch Your Car" program allows citizens to register their vehicle with police to stop their car if they see it on the streets between the hours of 1 and 5 a.m. A decal with a pair of eyes will signal an officer to check the driver of a vehicle between those hours to make sure it is the owner and not a potential thief.

Other methods of car theft prevention and anti-theft devices will be showcased for the public. Without proper theft prevention for your car, police estimate only a 52 to 62 percent recovery rate with the stolen item not stripped by thieves.

For more information or to find out the most popular cars for thieves, visit Metro's Web site at www.lvmpd.com.

Trailblazing Gravatt enjoying choice made to don uniform

By Tanya Flanagan
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Jackie Gravatt traveled the world for 12 years with her Air Force husband, living in Guam, Turkey and Phoenix. She changed jobs every few years, adjusting to a new life, city and lifestyle at each stop.

Then she and the couple's son moved to Las Vegas when Troy, her husband, was assigned to Nellis Air Force Base. With a sister living here and her mom on the way to this desert city, Gravatt, 30, decided Las Vegas would be her last stop.

She also determined it was time for a career.

With an Associate's Degree in Psyche Technology from Apollo College in Phoenix and extensive work experience in behavioral health for adolescents, she set her sights on becoming a North Las Vegas police officer. Troy was supportive.

"I know she has a good head on her shoulders and won't put herself in any danger," he said. "I have total faith in everything she does."

She was the first and remains the only African-American woman serving on a department with 208 sworn police officers. Of the 208, 20 are African-American males, 21 Hispanic males and one Hispanic female. White men and women number 134 and 22, respectively. Seven Asian males and one Asian female, plus one male racially



Jackie Gravatt remains the first and only African-American woman in the North Las Vegas Police Department.

listed as "other," are on the force.

Gravatt, however, didn't pursue the post to affect the racial make up of the department. Fact is, she tossed the idea around for two years before acting. One day, while talking with a neighbor, she learned the department was recruiting and submitted an application. That was two years ago.

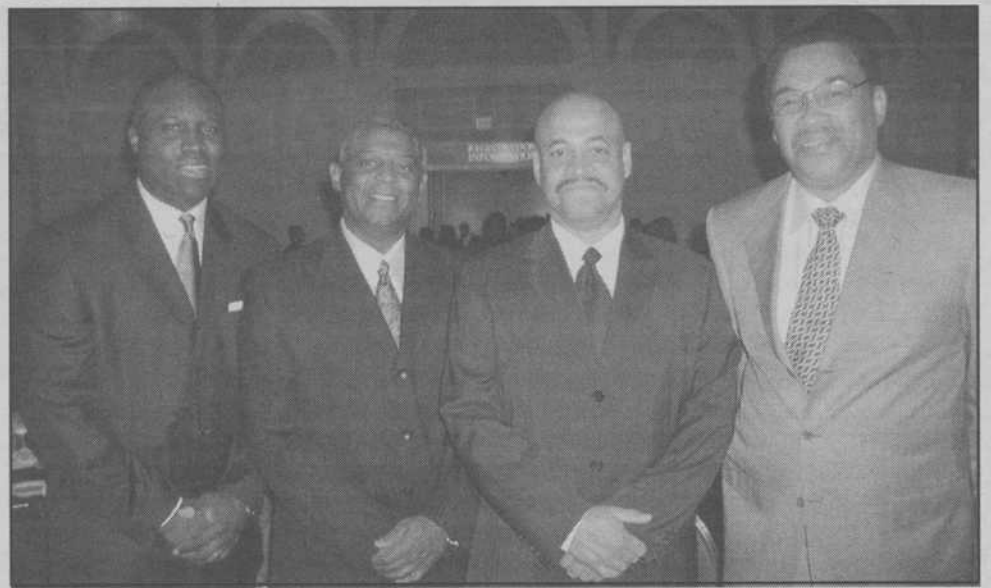
"When I really think about it, it's hard to believe everybody doesn't have a desire to do their job like I do," Gravatt said. "I love going to work everyday. I can't imagine not wanting to feel this way."

Last month, Victory Mis-

sionary Baptist Church recognized her during Sunday service. Gravatt said it blows her mind sometime when the reality soaks in that she is the first African-American woman on the police department. Colleagues support her, especially North Las Vegas Constable Herb Brown and Lt. Victor Dunn.

Brown started with North Las Vegas' police department in 1971 and served 21 years until he retired to accept the position of U.S. Marshal for the District of Nevada. Brown, a former recruiter for the department, said he made many efforts to bring Black

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Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Tony Gladney, external diversity for Caesars Entertainment, Paul Jones, company vice president of diversity, Flamingo Las Vegas President Lorenzo Creighton and Steve Bell, executive vice president of human resources for Caesars entertainment, helped to sponsor the dinner in which Democratic strategist Donna Brazile spoke at the Flamingo.

Brazile wants Dems united

Strategist uses personal stories to energize

By Lés Pierres Streater
Sentinel-Voice

Donna Brazile is a woman who knows what sacrifice means. Her parents toiled as a janitor and housekeeper so that she could get a college education.

"My mother was a domestic worker and my father was a janitor at a local school," Brazile said. "They had nine children. What they taught us as young kids growing up was to respect one another, love one another, do good and give back."

"When I went off to college, my mother and father didn't send me a lot of money," Brazile continued. "They couldn't give me a lot of material things. What they gave me was direction. 'If you get in, you better get out,' they said. 'And if you get in, you better stay in until you get that paper.'"

Brazile has used her education and the work ethic instilled in her by her parents to climb to prominent leadership positions in the Democratic Party. She managed Gore-Lieberman presidential campaign. Brazile is currently

chair of the Democratic National Committee's Voting Rights Institution, an adjunct professor at Georgetown University, political commentator on CNN's "Inside Politics" and "American Morning."

The veteran Democratic political strategist was keynote speaker on March 6 as The Center for Academic Enrichment & Outreach at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) celebrated its annual National TRIO/GEAR UP at the Flamingo Hotel & Casino. The Center coordinates programs, services and training to assist students of all ages prepare for a successful college experience at UNLV.

Stars of the Democratic Party were out in full force. Clark County Commissioner Yvonne Atkinson Gates, director of marketing and community relations at The Center, hosted the program. Congresswoman Shelley Berkley introduced Brazile.

Brazile told the gathering the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. filled her with hope and was a voice of freedom,

giving hearers a vision of joy and opportunity. That was the beginning of her journey into American politics. Nowadays Brazile advocates most for participation in voting.

"Only 2 million young people participated in the last presidential election," she said, "but that over 15 million young people participated in the voting process for the TV show 'American Idol.'"

Acknowledging her parents' sacrifice was the thrust of her message.

"Every week my mother would send me a plain sheet of white paper with \$5," said Brazile, a graduate of Louisiana State University. "Your daddy and I are working two jobs to take care of you and hoping that you can obtain a better life. I am scrubbing floors. I am cleaning toilets and I am cooking food for other people's children so that you can be able to get a good education. When I received that \$5 every week for four years that reminded me of the huge sacrifices that we receive from our parents and

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